

Lofgren: “Republicans All Talk, No Action on Illegal Immigration and Border Security”

Media Contact: Kyra Jennings, 202.225.3072, kyra.jennings@mail.house.gov

Washington, DC – Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose), Ranking Democratic Member of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment, today criticized Republican failures on illegal immigration during a border security hearing, one of the first immigration hearings planned across the country by the Republican Leadership.

Below is Rep. Lofgren’s Subcommittee opening statement as submitted for the record:

“While I am pleased that we are finally turning our attention today to the question of intelligence and border security, I must say Mr. Chairman, this hearing and the other hearings the Republican leadership has scheduled in the next few months are a day late and a dollar short. Correction – we are six years late and millions of dollars short.

“President Bush took office in 2001. This Congress has been controlled by Republicans since 1995. The Senate, with one exception, has had a majority of Republicans since 1995. The Federal government, charged with making and enforcing the laws of this nation, have been under the sole control of Republicans for the last six years.

“With complete control of legislation and enforcement of the law for six years, you would think that a party that now calls so vigorously for border security and enforcement of immigration law could have solved the problem of illegal immigration by now.

“But, Mr. Chairman, the Republican Party seems to be all talk on this subject.

“Here is just a partial list of the failures presided over by the Republican majority on illegal immigration:

- Since 1995 when the Senate and the House were taken over by the Republican Party, 5.3 million undocumented immigrants came to the United States.

- Since 2001 when President Bush came to power, over 2 million undocumented immigrants have entered the United States.

- In 2004, Congress enacted the Intelligence Reform Act (or the 9/11 Act), which mandated an additional 2,000 Border Patrol agents being hired over each of the next five years, but the President’s subsequent budgets and Congress have failed to include adequate resources to implement the Act. Indeed, the President’s FY 2006 budget called for only 210 additional Border Patrol agents.

- In FY 2006, the Congress, with both House and Senate controlled by Republicans, eventually funded only 1,000 additional agents.

- The 9/11 Act also mandated an additional 800 immigration enforcement agents over each of the next five years. And yet, for FY 2006, the Congress funded only 350 additional agents.

- The Act also mandated an additional 8,000 detention beds, but for FY 2006, the Congress funded only 1,800 additional

detention beds.

- President Bush and House Republicans continue to under-fund the Border Patrol. The President's FY 2007 budget does not fully fund the authorized levels for the Border Patrol.

- During the Bush Administration, "Catch and Release has become rampant, a program under which 12,000 undocumented immigrants each month are apprehended from countries other than Mexico are released and allowed to live in the United States while awaiting a deportation hearing. Yet, the Federal government which is completely controlled by Republicans, 70% of OTMs are released into the interior with notices to appear at a later date never to be heard of again.

- According to the Washington Post, between 1999 and 2003, work-site enforcement operations were scaled back 95% by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The number of employers prosecuted for unlawfully employing immigrants dropped from 182 in 1999 to only four in 2003, and fines collected declined from \$3.6 million to \$212,000. In 1999, the United States initiated fines against 417 companies. In 2004, it issued fine notices to only three.

- Next to nothing has been done to secure our Northern border at a time when 17 suspected terrorists were arrested in Toronto, there are reportedly 50 terrorist groups in Canada, the "Millennium Bomber" was arrested as he attempted to cross the Northern border with explosives, and the Congressional Research Service says that Canada is a "favored destination for terrorist groups [as] a safe haven, transit point and place to raise funds." While the Republican leadership in Congress focuses on the Southern border with 10,000 Border Patrol agents stationed along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico, only 1/10th that amount is on the Canadian border, a border that is 2.5 times as long as the Mexican border. Recent news stories state that people drive, walk, sail, ski, and sled across the Northern border all the time.

- On December 16, 2005, all 219 House Republicans voting that day opposed a proposal, the Democratic motion to recommit to H.R. 4437, to improve border security and immigration enforcement by fulfilling the 9/11 Commission's border security recommendations. The proposal would have hired more border agents, ended the "catch and release" practice by authorizing 100,000 additional detention beds and incorporated state-of-the art surveillance technology, including cameras, sensors, radar, satellites, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in order to ensure 100% border coverage. [HR 4437 , Vote #660, 12/16/2005, 198-221]

- In 2005, of 227 House Republicans, 226 voted against a comprehensive Homeland Security Authorization proposal by Democrats that would commit \$41 billion to securing the nation from terrorist threats - \$6.9 billion more than the President's budget. The proposal contained \$28.4 billion for border and transportation security, immigration processing, and other security functions - \$4 billion more than the President's budget. [HR 1817, Vote #188, 5/18/2005, 199-228]

- In 2005, of 227 Republicans voting, 225 voted against an effort to add \$284 million to an emergency spending bill for securing the nation's borders. The added funding would have hired 550 additional border patrol agents and 200 additional immigration investigators. Finally, the proposal would have provided funding for unmanned border aerial vehicles, which have been used successfully in a test in Arizona to assist in surveillance. [HR 1268, Vote #160, 5/5/2005, 201-225]

"Mr. Chairman, there is a lot of tough talk these days about immigration, but the record of those promoting that talk on real action is poor. That's been the pattern for a decade.

"And it continues today. Just last week I was in a House Administration Committee meeting that began a series of Republican hearings on immigration. Today, we are having a hearing on intelligence and border security in this committee. On July 5th, we have been told that the House International Relations Subcommittee will hold a field hearing in San Diego on border vulnerabilities and international terrorism. On the same day, we are told that the Senate Republicans will also get involved with a hearing in Philadelphia. The hearing list continues:

- July 7th, the House International Relations Subcommittee on Terrorism and Nonproliferation will reportedly hold a field hearing in Laredo, TX on border vulnerabilities and international terrorism.

- Mid-July, the House Education and Workforce Committee may hold a hearing on making English the official language

and how enforcement of immigration laws affects U.S. workers.

- August 14th, the House Government Reform Committee may hold a field hearing in Yuma, Arizona on the costs of an unsecured border to local, state, and federal governments.

- August, Rep. Hunter may convene hearings on the National Guard use for border security.

"This looks like a political effort, not a serious government effort. And these hearings are all talk and no action.

"It seems to me that this hearing on border intelligence is just another in the long list of hearings held and planned by this Republican-led Congress that lead to absolutely no solutions to a problem the American public cares about."